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20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) In a study of the Los Angeles Times, 135 issues were content analyzed to determine trends in coverage of the Vietnam War and public opposition to the war over a nine-year period. Seven war-related categories were analyzed: U.S. forces in combat, U.S. military activities other than in Vietnam, war-related activi- ties not involving the United States, the anti-war movement, defense appropriations, and non-combat activities involving U.S. forces in Vietnam. Of these, the first two received the most		

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Statistically significant trends were noted. Stories reporting U.S. forces in Vietnam decreased while anti-war protest stories increased over the research period.

This thesis also contains an exhaustive literature review and bibliography of references relating to the Vietnam War, public protests against the war, press coverage of wars in general and the Vietnam War in particular, content analysis of newspapers and other media publications, and the interplay of war coverage and protests.

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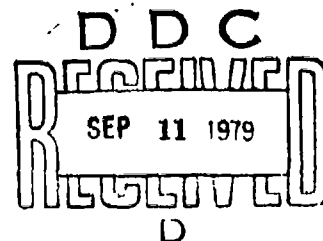
Print Coverage of Military Conflict:  
The Los Angeles Times and the Vietnam War  
(A Content Analysis, 1964-1972)

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Final report, 5 June 1979

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

A thesis submitted to California State University, Fullerton,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Communications.



Print Coverage of Military Conflict:  
The Los Angeles Times and the Vietnam War  
(A Content Analysis, 1964-1972)

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University, Fullerton


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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Communications

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By  
Richard Paul Holk


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### Abstract

In a study of the Los Angeles Times, 135 issues were subjected to content analysis to determine trends in coverage of the Vietnam War and public opposition to the war over a nine-year period, 1964 to 1972.

Seven war-related categories were analyzed: U.S. forces in combat, U.S. military activities other than in Vietnam, peace efforts, war-related activities not involving the United States, the anti-war movement, defense spending, and non-combat activities involving U.S. forces in Vietnam. Of these, the first two received the most coverage, while the anti-war movement and defense spending received the least.

Statistically significant trends were noted. Stories reporting U.S. forces in Vietnam decreased, while stories reporting anti-war protests increased over the research period.

A total of 1,506 stories, editorials, art items, and photographs was coded. Of these, 1,348 stories were subjected to analysis ranging from descriptive statistics to Spearman rank-order correlations.

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Print Coverage of Military Conflict:  
The Los Angeles Times and the Vietnam War  
(A Content Analysis, 1964-1972)

Introduction

Wars traditionally present journalists with a dichotomy between the right of the people to know and the military's need to maintain operational security. Reports from correspondents over more than a century of conflicts generally have reflected two widely diverse philosophies cited by Knightley (1975, p. 269). The first according to Knightley was expressed by an editor of the Chicago Daily News and one-time war correspondent, Paul Scott Mowrer:

In this nation of ours, the final political decisions rest with the people. And the people, so that they may make up their minds, must be given the facts, even in time of war, or perhaps especially in time of war. . . .

The contrasting view was described by a nameless military censor at a meeting in Washington, D.C., during World War II: "I wouldn't tell the people anything until the war is over and then I'd tell them who won."

In addition to this dichotomy, another factor has complicated most of America's wars since the Revolution—public protest. Whether or not rising or falling public opinion was a reaction to or somehow influenced press

reports about the wars is widely debated and has not been resolved. This question should be addressed by scholars studying agenda-setting, uses and gratification theory, and gatekeeping. Nevertheless, public opposition during the United States' involvement in Vietnam was a significant part of the news. Thus, any scholarly study of the Vietnam War and press coverage of it should include an analysis of how the press covered the protest activities as well.

During the decade from the mid-1960's through the mid-1970's, the United States participated in a conflict that did not enjoy popular support. While public opinion had been against wars in the past, opposition to the Vietnam War was at times more violent, especially after 1965 (Butwin & Pirmantgen, 1972, pp. 105-106; Mueller, 1973, pp. 30-32). Print coverage of U.S. military operations and public opposition to the war effort appears to have reached the point of saturation at times with little other news on the front pages of many newspapers (Lane, 1971, p. 184). A brief chronological overview of the war and protests against it will serve as an introduction to this thesis and place the research period into historical perspective.

#### The War Years

In mid-1954 the Geneva accords ended the Indochina War between Vietnamese guerrillas and French forces. Only three months later, President Dwight D. Eisenhower offered to help the South Vietnamese government with its continuing struggle against insurgent elements. By early February 1955

the first 200 American military advisers had started to train the South Vietnamese Army, but their arrival was given only modest coverage in the American press (Mueller, 1973, p. 29; Knightley, 1975, p. 374). During November 1960 several hundred civilians were killed in Saigon during a revolt of paratroopers. Thereafter, the American media began to increase coverage of the Indochina problem and American involvement (Knightley, 1975, p. 374).

Public opinion concerning the presence of U.S. military forces in Southeast Asia was mixed during the first several years, though few people were even aware of American participation. There were no massive demonstrations prior to 1963 for or against U.S. involvement in Indochina, perhaps because it was so difficult for most Americans and the press to distinguish Vietnam from the other so-called brush-fire wars that had occurred since American combat forces left South Korea (Butwin & Pirmantgen, 1972, p. 104). The few outward signs of the coming protests were embodied largely in the folk songs of Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, and Peter, Paul, and Mary, among others.

Commenting on the early stages of protest activity, Butwin and Pirmantgen (1972) wrote that

The early peace movement . . . was less concerned about specific wars than about the East-West arms race, nuclear testing, intercontinental ballistic missiles. Audiences joined Pete Seeger and Joan Baez when they sang "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" and hoped that the meaning of its words might remain nonspecific, vague, a protest against war-in-general. (p. 104)

American newspapers encountered their own problems in trying to sort out the Vietnam situation. Three analysts of the period commented on the general theme of the gap between official versions of the war and what correspondents wrote was actually happening in Vietnam. In their study of the Los Angeles Times, Gottlieb and Wolt (1977) wrote:

The most difficult problem for both Washington and Los Angeles . . . [was] the nature of the story itself. Vietnam dominated Washington news more and more, and it was hard to avoid questioning American policy. "The Administration would say one thing and then Vietnam correspondents would come back and say things that contradicted the White House position," Times staffer John Averill commented. As the war escalated, Times Washington copy began to express more skepticism towards government information. . . . Questions regarding the truth about the war were widely articulated, in part, by the growing antiwar movement. (p. 384)

Had the problem been limited to one newspaper, few scholars of the Vietnam era would have become concerned. However, the credibility gap issue was a factor across the United States, especially during the early stages of the war, as Butwin and Pirmantgen (1972) noted:

The government's tendency to lie or to hide information about the war was countered—in part—by the press, and gradually many people came to doubt or disbelieve most official statements on the subject. . . . In the early years of the war, the press was slow to grasp the extent of government evasion, but gradually newsmen came to play an important part in closing the credibility gap, or in revealing its size. . . . Members of the press more than once charged that the government was trying to manage the news, and in turn the President and other officials accused the press of distorting the news. (pp. 117-118)

Hynds (1975) expanded on the credibility gap issue:

Reporters on the scene [in Vietnam] could not confirm the optimistic reports flowing from government sources.

Distrust of the government sources increased as the war dragged on and on without the hoped-for successes. The people were confused as to what was going on there and why Americans were involved in it. The press was frustrated in its efforts to help them by government efforts to manage the flow of information about the war. (p. 207)

The confusion created by the disagreement between the media and the government on the Vietnam War's news may have precipitated public opinion against the war. In the early years of the American combat involvement in Vietnam, American public opinion followed the basic pattern of the Korean Conflict—general support at the start, a gradual decline, and finally general opposition. But opposition to Vietnam escalated to active and sometimes violent protests and demonstrations that characterized the latter war years (Mueller, 1973, pp. 53-57).

In October 1963 when Americans in Vietnam numbered 14,000, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara predicted that most U.S. military personnel would be out of Vietnam by 1965; less than three months later he withdrew the plan (Mueller, 1973, p. 29). The scattered protests in 1964 do not appear to have been tied to McNamara's change in plans or to any other single factor, perhaps because of the presidential election which many believed was the most appropriate test of peace sentiment (Butwin & Pirmantgen, 1972, p. 105). While 1964 was a relatively tame year in terms of protests, the spring of 1965 saw the start of the significant protests that would characterize the remainder of the decade. Most of the demonstrations in 1965 opposed



American bombings of North Vietnam. The first major protest came in April when 15,000 demonstrators led by Students for a Democratic Society marched in Washington, D.C. (Butwin & Pirmantgen, 1972, pp. 105-106). Later in 1965 an estimated 70,000 people participated in larger demonstrations (Chomsky, 1970, pp. 82-83).

Despite these progressively larger demonstrations, general public support for the U.S. policy on Vietnam remained relatively high through early 1967, but declined rapidly as the year progressed (Mueller, 1973, pp. 54-55). There does not seem to have been a single, identifiable cause for the increasingly vocal opposition to the war, though Americans may have begun to think that our involvement had dragged on too long (Butwin & Pirmantgen, 1972, pp. 123-124).

Military operations through early 1968 consisted largely of ground combat with helicopter support. In a surprise move in January and February 1968, the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces conducted a massive assault attacking most cities and towns in South Vietnam. The Pentagon's response was a call for an additional 206,000 troops (Mueller, 1973, p. 31; Dareff, 1971, p. 31). Some anti-war critics charged that President Johnson was taking "the country deeper into the Vietnam quagmire in a vain attempt to win an immoral and unwinnable war" (Dareff, 1971, p. 31).

Public opinion against the war also increased during

1968 shortly after the enemy's Tet offensive. Burns Roper (in Braestrup, 1977, Vol. I, p. 676) studied more than 200 public opinion polls and concluded that the months of February and March 1968 led to a turning point in American public opinion concerning the Vietnam War. As the peace movement and public opposition to the war grew, they began to monopolize the front page (Lane, 1971, p. 184). Unfortunately for President Lyndon B. Johnson, the increased news coverage tended to focus on the war and the peace movement which widely opposed the Administration's policies. The media generally ignored the support President Johnson still had from labor, business, and the Congress (Lane, 1971, p. 184).

Perhaps as a response to the war's demands and his falling public support, President Johnson announced in March 1968 that he would not run for reelection in November. He also initiated planning for the peace talks which were to be held in Paris (Emery, 1972, p. 544).

After President Richard M. Nixon's election in November 1968, media coverage began to concentrate on troop withdrawals and the peace talks that began in Paris during May 1969. Front-page newsplay also began to include discussions of a small Vietnam village where the American military was accused of murdering civilians. Though the massacre at My Lai had actually occurred in March 1968, it was not revealed in the American press nationally until late 1969 when a series of stories by Seymour Hersh was distributed by the Dispatch News Service. Among the first newspapers to use

the story was the Chicago Sun-Times starting on November 13, 1969 (Hersh, 1970, pp. 193-194).

As the American press sorted out the incident during the following months, domestic protest grew stronger. By the end of 1969 the general level of support for the war had declined to a lower level than any experienced during the Korean Conflict (Mueller, 1973, p. 57). When U.S. forces entered Cambodia in April and May 1970, anti-war sentiment literally exploded on college campuses across the nation. A direct result was the tragedy at Kent State University in Ohio where four students were killed by National Guardsmen called up to maintain order during student demonstrations (Butwin & Pirmantgen, 1972, pp. 176-180). A concise summary of the events at Kent State is contained in Butwin and Pirmantgen and is reproduced as Appendix I of this thesis to explain in part how the protest at Kent State grew from a rally against American bombing of North Vietnam into the tragedy it became.

In addition to increasing student unrest, the revelation of the My Lai massacre may have had a negative effect on the American media. This impact may be exemplified in part by the declining Saigon press corps. While there were 637 accredited press correspondents in Vietnam during 1968, there were only 392 left by 1970. The total press corps declined to 295 by 1972. Some correspondents of the period have remarked that it became increasingly difficult for them to get their stories about Vietnam printed after 1969 although combat activity and war damage throughout Southeast

Asia were increasing (Knightley, 1975, pp. 398-400).

Through 1970 and 1971, Americans read of the war's escalation into Cambodia and Laos, declining U.S. ground combat operations in Vietnam, the conviction of Army Lieutenant William Calley for the My Lai massacre, the "Pentagon Papers," which detailed a portion of the government's view of the Vietnam situation, and protests such as the bombing of the Army Mathematics Research Center on the campus of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, a frequent target of anti-war demonstrations. These and related factors may have caused a shift in focus for those who opposed the war, for in the same period active protest also began to decline (Knightley, 1975, p. 399). Though public opinion polls showed that Americans were still against the war by a factor of two to one (Mueller, 1973, p. 55), the few anti-war protests that were held were generally less vocal and less violent than they had been in the preceding several years.

The final year of U.S. ground combat involvement in Vietnam was 1972. As media coverage declined, Americans found other matters to read about in their newspapers—President Nixon's trip to China, battles in Northern Ireland, the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, and the November elections. With the exception of bombing in North Vietnam, peace talks, and the prisoner-of-war releases, America's nearly 20-year ground combat involvement in Vietnam was all but over.

## I. The Research Problem

### Media Coverage of War and Protest

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to judge the conduct of the American Armed Forces or the public at large for their activities during the research period. The purpose of this thesis was to seek answers to several questions that pertain to the manner and content of media coverage of those activities. While television coverage of the Vietnam War has been analyzed in terms of both method and content (refer to Adams, 1977; Bailey & Lichty, 1972; and Pride & Wamsley, 1972, for examples of television analysis), it appears that no scholarly study has been reported that discusses how a single newspaper covered the Vietnam War and public opposition to it. Several newspapers, including the one selected for this study, have been examined historically, but none has been subjected to detailed review using content analysis of the single issue of an unpopular war. Studies by Funkhouser (1973), Myers (1974), and Ryan and Owen (1976) are typical of the scholarly research applied to media coverage of social issues including war news.

In an attempt to locate more precise information on newspaper and crisis coverage analyses, a computer literature search was conducted by trained researchers at the California

State University, Fullerton, library using the resources of the Computerized Information Retrieval Service. Only a few citations were found that discuss content analysis in general, content analysis of newspapers, and basic theories of newspaper functions. All sources produced during the literature search plus others located independently by this researcher were consulted in preparing this thesis.

It was also the purpose of the thesis to add to the body of knowledge concerning mass communications by detailing how a single newspaper covered the war in Vietnam and protests against American involvement in Southeast Asia. Selection of a newspaper as the research medium is supported by a 1971 Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) report discussed by Hynds (1975). People tend to look to newspapers for information about news that interests them most, they seem to prefer newspapers for complicated news, and they read newspapers to learn about special groups (p. 19). Though subsequent research may show that people turn to television for the same gratifications, this research considers the period addressed in the 1971 ORC study. The research period from 1964 through 1972 was characterized by a popular acceptance of newspapers as the primary source to satisfy information needs.

Selection of the Newspaper to Study. The Los Angeles Times is one of only a few national daily newspapers (a group generally including the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, and

Los Angeles Times). Each of these newspapers has the opportunity for exposure among a wide cross-section of socioeconomic groups across the nation in addition to their primary circulation region. The Los Angeles Times also has the distinction of circulating in one of the nation's largest and most populated metropolitan areas. It has the potential of being circulated in and read by residents of the majority of Southern California's population, chiefly in Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino, Ventura, and Riverside Counties, plus portions of the surrounding areas. The combined population of this region is more than 10 million, half of California's total. Hart (1975) reported that 81 percent of the Los Angeles Times' circulation was delivered to the homes of metropolitan residents in 1963. This factor "pushed the Times toward deeper, more interpretative news treatment" and away from the headline news that was more suited to street sales (p. 177). Figure 1 displays the Times' primary circulation region and population totals according to the 1970 Census.

In addition to its circulation, the Los Angeles Times has built a favorable reputation nationally. Prior to the 1960's, the Times was generally regarded as less than a first-rate paper. As the decade progressed, the national rating of the Times improved rapidly:

In 1964 the American Society of Journalism School Administrators presented the Times with its annual citation for newspaper excellence. In light of the paper's long decades of national journalistic

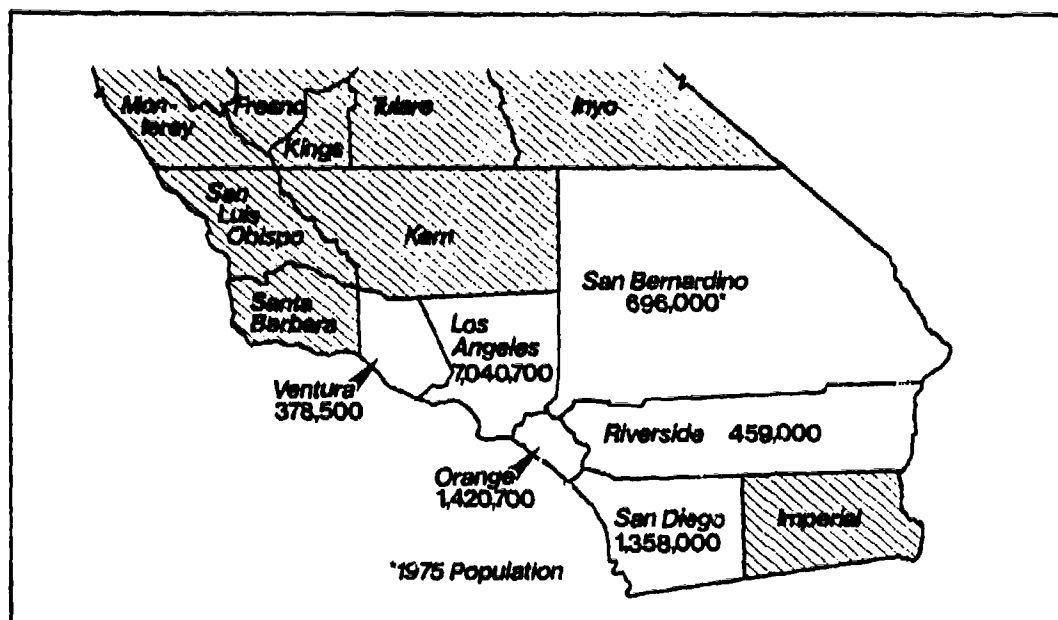


Figure 1. Primary circulation area for the Los Angeles Times and 1970 populations by Southern California county. (Source of population data: The World Almanac & Book of Facts, 1979, pp. 244-245.)

obscurity, the ascent to such recognition was sudden indeed. (Hart, 1975, p. 170)

After 1964, the Los Angeles Times was regularly named among the top 10 newspapers in the nation. Its transformation from eight decades of provincialism to an acclaimed model of journalistic excellence also helped the newspaper to be named by Time as one of the nation's top 10 newspapers in 1964 ("The Ten Best American Dailies," 1964). Time evaluated but did not rank the nation's best newspapers as the Baltimore Sun, Cleveland Press, Louisville Courier Journal, Milwaukee Journal, Minneapolis Morning Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Daily News, New York Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and Washington Post. Though the Time article



did not specify the criteria for these selections, the inclusion of the Los Angeles Times placed it with distinguished company.

Hart (1975) also noted that the Los Angeles Times was still highly rated in 1970 when Edward Bernays surveyed publishers who ranked the Los Angeles Times in second place just behind the New York Times in overall quality (p. 490), up from its eighth place ranking in a similar survey conducted in 1961 (Hynds, 1975, p. 257). No criteria were specified in either of those citations.

Hart (1975), one of a very few authorized analysts of the Los Angeles Times, studied the newspaper historically with full cooperation of the Times' editorial and reportorial staffs. He revealed that the Times was unlike some other newspapers whose staffs were caught between the Saigon and Washington versions of a story:

Once the Times overseas contingent became large enough, a major news event could produce a blend of distinctive treatments by an entire team of Timesmen—each viewing the developing situation from a different location with a different stylistic perspective. The huge Times news hole allowed Los Angeles editors to run each unique treatment largely untouched. (p. 245)

While some other newspapers had to rely heavily or exclusively on the major wire services, the Los Angeles Times was able to develop and improve its own network of national and international news-gathering teams in addition to using national wires (Hart, 1975, pp. 489-490). The reporting from Vietnam by Times' correspondents was well-respected as evidenced by Jack Foisie's Overseas Press Club

Award in 1965 which he won for his Vietnam reporting. The award was the first of seven consecutive similar citations (Hart, 1975, p. 232).

Aronson (1971) provides another view of the Times:

While the reader . . . must pick his way through a forest of ads for swimming pools and geriatric medical aids in his hunt for news and commentary, he will find both in greater profusion than ever before, and often presented with considerable enlightenment. The Times, however, has made no sacrifices in expanding its news coverage. It has grown richer and fatter than ever. (pp. 16-17)

Selection of the Research Period. Most quantitative research relies heavily on the principle of randomization so results can be generalized to the population from which a sample is drawn. In the case of studying media coverage of a war, a specific period should also be selected. Such combat periods have occurred several times in this century—World Wars I and II, Korea, Vietnam, and several smaller conflicts in which the United States was involved to a lesser degree.

Since the researcher is an active duty U.S. Army officer and served in Vietnam, that conflict was chosen as the period for study since it is of interest to the researcher. Also, the Vietnam War may prove to be the most widely covered armed conflict of this century. At its peak, the war was covered by no less than 637 accredited correspondents from worldwide media organizations and outlets (Knightley, 1975, p. 398). The war is also America's most recent large-scale military operation and it has the dubious

distinction of being our longest military confrontation.

When considering the Vietnam War, the conflict period is finite. The United States became actively involved in Southeast Asia, and in Vietnam particularly, in 1955 when President Eisenhower committed this country to advisory support to the Saigon government. Since active military combat units did not go to Vietnam until about 10 years later, and since comprehensive media coverage did not begin until about 1964 and 1965, it was deemed logical to begin the research period about the time that media coverage and American combat involvement began—1964.

The final year for study was also selected on the basis of ground force combat activity, in this case the end of that involvement. American ground force combat units completed their withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1972. Since this study was designed to analyze the Times' coverage of the ground war and protests, a logical year to end the content analysis was 1972, though the air war and advisory support continued through 1975. Carrying the study beyond 1972 or beginning earlier than 1964 was deemed to produce little data of significance to the study.

The nine-year period included the evolution, intensification, and decline of both ground combat involving U.S. forces and public opposition to the war. What had started in the mid-1950's as almost routine support for and coverage of another brush-fire war in Indochina grew to dominating coverage of America's longest, most unpopular war.

### Research Questions

One question dominated this research: What was the pattern of coverage of the Vietnam War by a major U.S. newspaper? Several related, but subsidiary questions were also addressed in data collection and analysis:

1. What general war-related topics received the most coverage from 1964 through 1972?
2. Did coverage of military combat versus non-combat stories change during the course of the war?
3. Which types of war-related stories received the dominant newsplay as measured by attention scores?
4. What types of combat and protest story attribution were used during the war and how frequently?
5. Was anti-war violence covered more than non-violent demonstrations?
6. Did newsplay of combat and protest activities vary over time during the course of the war?

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to learn how a major American newspaper, the Los Angeles Times, handled news coverage of an unpopular war. Available literature discusses in general terms how the war progressed and how some segments of the American public responded to the war. This thesis went an additional step to examine a specific newspaper to learn how it handled itself during an unpopular military crisis—the Vietnam War.

### Assumptions

Several assumptions guided the research:

1. The United States' involvement in Southeast Asia was unpopular, especially from 1968 through 1970.
2. Opposition to the United States Armed Forces can be generalized from reports of public opposition to the war effort.
3. The Budd (1967) attention score is a valid measure of editorial news judgment and reader attention to a story.
4. Photographs and other art including editorial cartoons tend to draw reader attention.
5. A relationship exists between a story's attention score, length, and accompanying art.
6. Peaks in combat coverage may be tied to peaks in combat activity.

### Delimitations

The research operated under several delimitations which may or may not have affected the results:

1. No attempt was made to judge the possible biases expressed by writers in stories or by editors in newsplay except as measured by the Budd (1967) attention score. The researcher's own prejudices in favor of the U.S. Army were deemed significant enough to have made accurate bias analysis impossible.
2. The study did not correlate Vietnam coverage with media treatment of other crises except with relation to trends in protests against the Korean Conflict and rising

and falling public opinion on the Vietnam War.

3. The study did not correlate coverage of specific Vietnam War subjects with similar subjects in earlier wars.

4. No content analysis was performed on stories that may have appeared in classified, home and family, entertainment, food, sports, real estate, outdoors, or letters to the editor sections of the Los Angeles Times. Only news, editorial, opinion, and finance sections were examined.

5. Some issue- and event-oriented subjects relating to the war and protests may not have been analyzed if they appeared in stories on other subjects. Data extraction relied primarily on reading headlines and leads to determine general story subject matter.

#### Justification and Implications

Scholarly Implications. The results of this thesis research may assist communications scholars in developing a general theory of crisis coverage. Though a war is but one of several types of crisis, it may be a society's most traumatic and longest crisis. Thus, analysis of a newspaper's performance during such a period may assist future researchers in studying media performance during similar or smaller scale crises. Also, since the Los Angeles Times is an important Southern California newspaper, this study should help scholars and media practitioners to understand how the newspaper performed in the past. It may also help subsequent researchers to predict how the newspaper will react and perform during future military crises.

Value to the United States Army. The thesis can be of special value to the U.S. Army. Military commanders and their public affairs staffs will know how print coverage by one newspaper was handled during an unpopular war. With this knowledge, the armed forces may be better able to plan public affairs activities to assist the media in understanding and keeping the American people informed about military plans and policies during future wars and during peacetime. Also, the thesis can assist Army planners in planning their public affairs budgets. Through careful review of this research and related studies, planners may be able to channel available funds for training into areas that will prepare current and future public affairs staffs in techniques of handling unfavorable media coverage, anti-U.S. Army sentiment and demonstrations, and public affairs releases and speeches during periods of unpopular military activities.

## II. Review of Related Literature

### Identification and Selection of Sources

A wide variety of sources was consulted at California State University, Fullerton, to identify references on the general subjects of media coverage of conflict and content analysis. The most lucrative were the CSUF Computerized Information Retrieval Service (CIRS), professional journal abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts International, and members of the thesis committee. These sources provided several hundred potentially useful references relating at least peripherally to the research topic. After a careful scan of each reference for focus and general applicability, the researcher selected the references most likely to contribute materially to the thesis and its primary research. Nearly a score of references was added based on bibliographies in the original sources.

Computerized Literature Search. A literature search was performed by trained researchers of the CSUF library's CIRS, which provided a listing of more than 150 sources relating to the general subjects of content analysis, newspaper coverage of conflict, and the role of journalists in war reporting. Though only 15 of these were directly applicable to the thesis, none of them were located without CIRS.

Resources of the Thesis Committee. All members of the



committee provided valuable assistance in selecting sources either from their personal libraries or from bibliographies they have compiled on related subjects. Many of these would not have been located in conventional indexes in a timely manner without the committee's assistance.

Other Resources. Among other lucrative sources were the CSUF library's reference collection; professional journal abstracts, indexes, and microfilm files; and dissertation indexes.

#### Media Coverage of Conflict

There does not appear to be any comprehensive empirical research focusing on war coverage in general or how a single newspaper covered a war and influenced or reacted to public opinion. After surveying a broad range of literature on crises and their coverage, Peled and Katz (1974) concluded:

One of the criticisms levelled against the tradition of research on media gratifications is that it postulates an active audience, people seeking to fulfill needs or to solve problems via exposure to mass communications. Whatever the merit of this argument in normal times, there is no doubt that in crisis the audience for the mass media consists of just such people. Most of the literature on communication and crisis deals with the role of the media in natural disasters. . . . Much thought, but only little empirical research, has been given to the uses of the media in situations of social disaster, where people are in conflict not with nature but with each other: revolution, communal strife, war. In a society at war, the media are even more carefully scrutinized—both by leaders and by scholars—from the point of view of content and control. . . . Curiously, more research seems to have been done on enemy propaganda than on the functions and effects of the domestic media during wartime. (pp. 49-50)

A general comparison of the conclusions in Peled and Katz (1974) with those in Braestrup (1969, 1978); Browne

(1964); Cogswell (1944); Dimmick (1973); Gordon (1977); Hart (1975); Scanlon, Luukko, and Morton (1978); Stevens (1969); and Yates (1979) reveals several additional factors concerning crisis coverage from which may be drawn general concepts of media performance during crises.

War Coverage in General. From the trial-and-error censorship of the American Civil War to the sometimes contradictory coverage of Vietnam, the American war correspondent has faced the job of keeping the people informed about a war often several thousands of miles away. General William C. Westmoreland's views on news coverage serve as a fitting introduction to this section:

In view of the impact of public opinion on the prosecution of the war, the accuracy and balance of the news coverage has attained an importance almost equal to the actual combat operation. (Braestrup, 1969, p. 8)

American media coverage of military conflict has been developing through at least a century of wars. Although there do not appear to be any reports of empirical research on conflict and crisis coverage during wars, the popular and professional literature do provide a view of crisis coverage during selected military conflict periods. Appendix II contains a review of this literature which focuses on the period from the American Civil War to the Vietnam War—a period of slightly more than 100 years. Among the common elements of the press coverage during these conflicts have been censorship; correspondent accreditation; and military, government, reporter, or editorial manipulation of some news

events. The review in Appendix II relies heavily on Knightley (1975), one of the few writers to examine in detail the role and functions of media during a broad range of military operations involving the United States. The reliance on Knightley in Appendix II is not intended as an endorsement of his conclusions.

Toward a General Theory of Crisis Coverage. Two studies examined World War I press coverage in Wisconsin and Montana. Though neither study concluded the states were typical of U.S. coverage in general, both provide insight into the type of coverage provided early in this century.

Stevens (1969) noted that some Wisconsin newspapers during World War I were openly defiant of internal security laws and seemed to encourage violence and dissent in their editorial coverage:

Taken as a whole, Wisconsin newspapers did little or nothing to quell the rising mob spirit during World War I; however, a detailed study of eight counties indicated that where papers were relatively tolerant of dissent, so were the citizens. (pp. 257-258)

Cogswell (1944) reported that during the first few months of World War I, the Montana press faced an initial period of rationalization, editorializing against U.S. flag-ship sinkings and against Germany. Before the United States entered the war, the Montana press took the initiative and wrote about the inevitability of American involvement; it remained strongly pro-Administration throughout the war (pp. 145-147).

Gordon (1977) concluded that mass communications media

performed in World War II as "instruments of combat" by serving as the primary means of persuasion and propaganda directed at the general population to improve morale and build support for the war effort (pp. 205-210). This function was not effective during the Korean Conflict or the Vietnam War, if performed at all, when popular support declined throughout the war periods. It is the interrelationship of the war correspondent and the war itself that may provide the key to developing a general theory of media coverage of military crisis. Dimmick (1973) reported that society's perceptions of war were shaped by media reports which in turn had been shaped by the war situation (p. 560).

Dimmick also reported that

Modern warfare places severe strains on the journalist who in times of peace attempts to report conflict situations "objectively" or "impartially." To the extent that he feels his society or way of life threatened by an enemy, the journalist may change his beliefs concerning his role. (p. 560)

Two primary factors may influence a correspondent to alter his role perceptions, according to Dimmick (1973). Role conflict is the struggle between the correspondent's desire to be patriotic and to be unbiased. Role stress includes reactions to any effort that hinders the correspondent, such as censorship (p. 560).

Dimmick's analysis does not account for the important role played by the combat situation itself. Braestrup (1978) wrote that the early stages of a war produce an environment in which no one (including reporters in

Washington) has a clear view of the crisis.

Especially in crisis, even the most authoritative sources speaking in all objectivity may be victims of the fog of war or of sheer distance from the action—a gap in perception and communication which always separates headquarters from field. (p. 527)

Because the initial portion of a crisis may produce inaccurate or incomplete reports, media managers must insist on careful newsplay so readers will be aware that the situation is yet to be clarified. Correspondents must also be pressed for clarification of crises as new information is obtained (Braestrup, 1978, p. 527). Braestrup expands on this point by reviewing the early stages of the enemy assaults during the Tet celebration in 1968:

The chronically short attention span of the media—four to six weeks in 1968—insured a feast-and-famine flow of information, aggravated by space and time limitations. As is usually the case in crisis, most space and "play" went to the Tet story early, when the least solid information was available. There was no institutional system within the media for keeping track of what the public had been told, no internal priority on updating initial impressions. As usual, the few catch-up or corrective stories later on were buried on back pages. (p. 517)

Part of the problem in war coverage is that newspapers tend to send several reporters to cover the action, but fail to establish a mechanism that will permit preparation of a unified view of the crisis situation (Braestrup, 1978, pp. 522-528).

Browne (1964) provided another insight: "Reporting in times of crisis can be a trying and sometimes hazardous business, particularly when elements in the story are actively hostile to the free press" (p. 4). In the early

stages of Vietnam War fighting, the Saigon government objected to American press coverage, particularly if that coverage was critical of the regime (Browne, 1964, pp. 4-8). Browne also commented on the interplay between the crisis and the newspaper reader:

War reporting in itself . . . is technically fairly simple. Reporting a single clash with X number of casualties is not unlike reporting a sports event. By an adroit use of verbs, the writer can create an impact that comes close to reproducing reality. But in Viet Nam, the actual clashes are probably less important than the subtle thinking of people and the social upheaval of the nation. These are difficult to capture in words, and for a reader to digest. (p. 8)

Braestrup (1969) and Browne (1964) report that war correspondents are frequently unprepared to cover active combat situations, have little or no knowledge of local language, and are unfamiliar with tactics or strategy (including military equipment). Braestrup (1969) wrote,

The U.S. media . . . did little to prepare [new reporters] for their assignments. No American [to Braestrup's knowledge] spoke Vietnamese; none were sent to learn it prior to assignment to Vietnam. Nor were those men who lacked previous contact with the military given an opportunity to brush up . . . on the differences between a machine-gun and a howitzer, "battalions" and "regiments." (p. 10)

Browne (1964), writing specifically on the Vietnam War, offers a perspective applicable to any war on foreign soil:

Newsman sometimes lack the necessary background in covering foreign assignments, particularly when newsmen are given only a few days or weeks in a particular country. Resident correspondents have the advantage of on-the-job training and eventually become qualified to do the basic investigation and research themselves. Visitors must rely on translators, official spokesmen,

and dozens of other second-hand sources who may or may not be trying to sell a bill of goods. (p. 9)

Scanlon, Luukko, and Morton (1978) examined the problem of crisis coverage accuracy. They concluded that most research on the subject characterized crisis reporting as inaccurate (Barton, 1962; Dynes, 1970; Kueneman & Wright, 1975; Scanlon, Jefferson, & Sproat, 1976; and Waxman, 1973). To ascertain if these pessimistic reports were themselves accurate, Scanlon et al. (1978) examined six Canadian crises from 1973 through 1976. The research team had expected to find widespread inconsistency, inaccuracy, and contradiction. Instead, they found that coverage was generally accurate with only a few cases of inadequate coverage. As positive as the Scanlon et al. (1978) report is, the results are not generalizable beyond the Canadian press examined in the study.

Crisis coverage has been characterized since World War I by initial unpreparedness, little effort toward printing amplifying or corrected information about the early stages of the crisis, but general improvement of overall quality of coverage as the crisis develops. This improvement has been shown to improve until readers, editors, or reporters (or some combination, as yet untested) tire of the constant or contradictory coverage at which time the crisis may be relegated to back-page coverage. If this assessment is true, analysis of any newspaper should reveal an initially dense coverage of the crisis and related stories, followed by a

gradual decline in coverage as the crisis continues.

In addition to the factors of the crisis itself, a media manager (such as a publisher, editor, or producer) has a role in determining how a crisis will be covered. Hart (1975) expanded on this element as he discussed the role of the Los Angeles Times in World War II:

The inevitable shortages of newsprint and ink meant newspapers would be smaller. Reduced size meant smaller production overhead. The immediate temptation was to fill a smaller Times with advertising. . . . The heavy ad lineage and smaller overhead would mean soaring profits. Most publishers made the obvious choice. But the war also meant an increased demand for news. The tighter newshole aggravated that demand. A few publishers . . . realized the war was an opportunity to build readership with expanded news coverage and reduced ad lineage. The policy would result in a temporary financial burden. But the potential was for long-range readership gains. (pp. 97-98)

Norman Chandler, the newspaper's publisher at the time, took advantage of the opportunity, added readership, and made money (Hart, 1975, p. 98).

Chicago Tribune foreign correspondent Ron Yates has suggested that the most difficult aspect of covering a military crisis is insuring that stories are accurate.

The most difficult part, other than just the logistics of getting to where the fighting is, is trying to analyze what you're seeing—trying to find out what's happening. One of the problems that all reporters had in Vietnam was that they'd never covered a war before. . . . [We] had to learn to read a battle situation. (Yates, 1979)

Yates said that reporters sometimes had a tendency to observe troops moving away from a battle area and then write that the troops were withdrawing when in fact they



were often part of a counteroffensive or blocking force. It was difficult to be accurate when reporters had to learn the tactics, observe the action, and take notes.

Yates was a member of the final evacuation flight from Saigon on April 29, 1975. He said that he believes correspondents' coverage of Southeast Asia was accurate on the whole, though reporters who were there for long periods found it difficult to remain emotionally detached from the people and the area (Yates, 1979).

In summary, crisis coverage during this century has followed a general pattern with new elements appended as a result of the Vietnam War. Reporters and their newspapers were generally unprepared to cover a military crisis and had to deploy to the war zone often without knowledge of the language, tactics, or military situation. As the initial reports were printed, they frequently contained information that was left unclarified or was buried inside the newspapers. As the situation developed, the quality of the reporting tended to improve, though both the readers and media managers began to tire of the coverage. Eventually, the crisis was covered with decreasing frequency. Problems of accuracy were complicated in the case of the Vietnam War by seemingly irreconcilable differences between stories originating in Vietnam and those from reporters in Washington.

#### Public Opinion and Protest

While there is little empirical literature on media coverage of crises, several references discuss the reactions

of the public to those crises, and more particularly to the roles that media play in shaping public opinion.

After studying adolescents to learn how they develop opinions, Hollander (1971) reported that the mass media are important sources of information about war:

This finding casts considerable doubt on the present utility of much of the previous research on the sources of political socialization and indicates that researchers have, perhaps, been passing over the major sources of political learning. The new "parent" is the mass media. (p. 479)

Kraus and Davis (1976) discuss in general terms the role of the media in shaping public opinion. "By just paying attention to some issues while ignoring others, the mass media . . . may set priorities of concern within various sectors of the public" (p. 213). Kraus and Davis conclude, however, that the body of scientific knowledge on agenda setting is far from conclusive—the specific role played by the media in forming or influencing public opinion has been suggested, but never thoroughly researched (p. 218).

However, public reaction to crisis has been documented during the past two wars fought by U.S. military forces. A closer examination of public opinion during the Korean and Vietnam wars shows that each tended to place a particular strain on the American public chiefly because the wars were so complex and involved an enemy force that could have no direct influence on American soil (Mueller, 1971, p. 358). The patterns of support during the two wars were remarkably similar though the Korean Conflict's support declined more

rapidly. The deterioration of support for American involvement in Vietnam was more gradual but ended in more violent opposition (Mueller, 1971, pp. 358-377). Figure 2 displays a comparison of support and opposition during the years for which data are available on Vietnam (adapted from Mueller, 1971, pp. 363-364; 1973, p. 56).

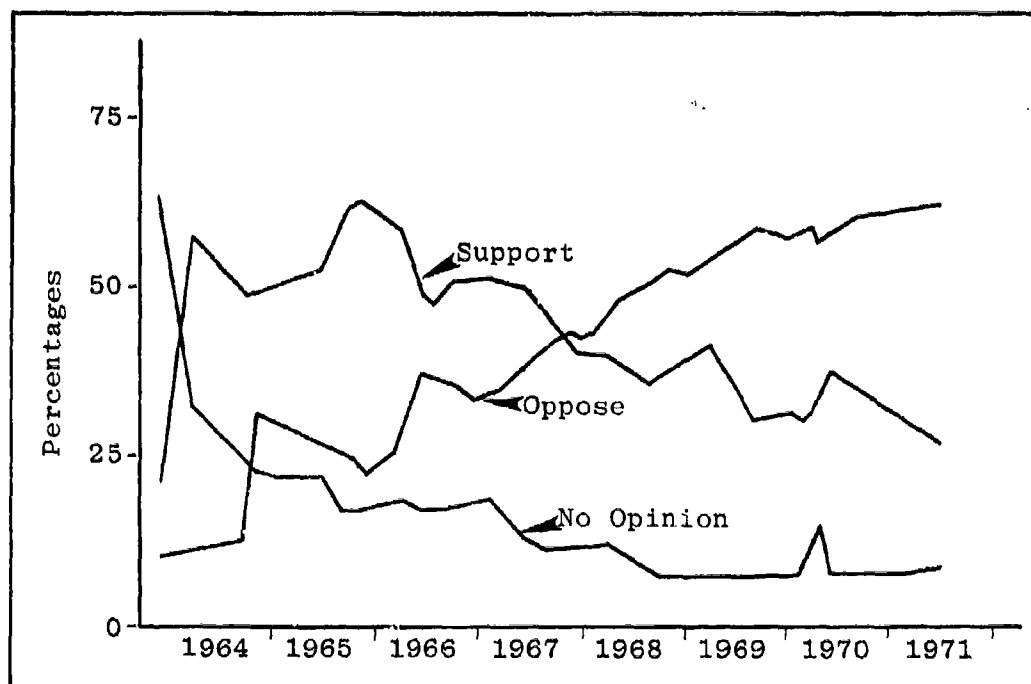


Figure 2. Trends in support for the Vietnam War by year from 1964 through 1971. (Adapted from Mueller, 1971, pp. 363-364, 1973, p. 56.)

Vietnam—Support or Oppose? Popular support in favor of U.S. troops going to Vietnam was initially high (61%). The percentage of people with no opinion on the war declined slowly from 1964, suggesting that people formed an opinion rather than becoming confused (Mueller, 1973, pp. 53-55).

Butwin and Pirmantgen (1972, pp. 180-199) and Mueller (1973, p. 55) reported that protest activities continued at a low level through the first years of America's involvement in Vietnam. When U.S. aircraft bombed North Vietnam in late 1970, protests increased and public opposition to the war effort increased to 60 percent.

#### The Los Angeles Times

During the research period, the Los Angeles Times increased its daily circulation for the metropolitan edition from 768,503 to 1,004,908 (an increase of 31%). Sunday circulation rose eight percent from 1,094,990 to 1,185,014 according to Audit Bureau of Circulation statements for September of each year (Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, 1964, p. 50; 1973, p. 34).

The Times did not enjoy a favorable reputation among newspaper professionals prior to the 1960's but its image improved as the newspaper became more politically independent (Hynds, 1975, p. 288).

The Los Angeles Times in Vietnam. Early in the Vietnam War, the Times established itself as "one of the most aggressive observers of the deteriorating Vietnam situation" (Hart, 1975, p. 238). Unlike other newspapers' reporters whose stories were often replaced by the official Washington story, the Los Angeles Times' management was committed to the principle of autonomy for the foreign staff. While the Times still supported the war, its editorial policy "played virtually no role in determining the tone of dispatches from

the Saigon bureau" (Hart, 1975, p. 243).

In June 1970 the Times' management discussed the newspaper's editorial policy concerning continued American involvement in Vietnam. Otis Chandler, the publisher, said simply that the Times would go anti-war, which it did on June 7, 1970, in an editorial headlined "Get Out of Vietnam NOW" (Gottlieb & Wolt, 1977, p. 478). In one day, the Times changed from an outspoken supporter of the Administration's Vietnam policy to an outspoken critic of the war, demanding immediate withdrawal.

### III. Procedures and Method

#### Content Analysis as a Research Tool

It does not appear that there has been any scholarly content analysis of a newspaper specifically to determine its coverage of crisis, particularly war, and public protests against that crisis. Since it was the purpose of this thesis to perform such an analysis, a brief overview of the research technique is appropriate.

History of the Content Analysis Technique. One form or another of content analysis has probably been used for centuries. By today's standards, early efforts were quite primitive. Even in the late 1970's content analysts generally agree that much is yet to be learned about the technique, standardizing its procedures, and computerizing data extraction. A form of content analysis was used in World War II as a means to study German propaganda for intelligence purposes (Carney, 1972, p. 28). The technique was refined in the next decade when Berleson (1952) published his methodology, which is generally credited with being the basis for modern content analysis, though his techniques undergo regular challenge and updating (Pool, 1959; Carney, 1972).

What the Technique Is and Does. Content analysis should be a relatively easy concept to understand. However,

more than a dictionary definition is required. Berleson (1952) defined the practice as a technique to count all parts of a specified text uniformly and impartially, taking the text at face value (Carney, 1972, p. 25). Carney challenges Berleson's "manifest content" specification as being too general and minimal. Carney updated a definition proposed by Lindzey and Aronson in 1966 and 1969 and terms content analysis a "technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Carney, 1972, p. 25).

Expanding on the incomplete and uncertain definitional approach, Babbie (1975) commented that content analysis may be performed either to understand communication processes or to understand the originators of an item of communication (p. 225). Pool (1970) wrote that content analysis, as an observational device, must be replicable (p. x). At least one content analysis reliability method was developed to establish coder accuracy (Scott, 1955).

Advantages of Content Analysis. Babbie (1975) said the technique of content analysis has several advantages over other means of analysis, among which are economies of time and funds (p. 232). Babbie also commented that content analysis is valuable for studying historical documents because it is unobtrusive and does not directly affect the source being studied if the research is properly designed and conducted (1975, p. 234). Quantitative semantics (another name for content analysis) is objective, precise,

and general (Pool, 1970, pp. 25-26) and is the most appropriate research vehicle for this study of a newspaper's coverage over a nine-year period.

#### Sample Size and Selection

As noted in the first chapter and immediately above, content analysis was selected as the research method for this study. Recent trends in this historically proven technique made it the ideal tool to use in answering the research questions.

This study analyzed daily and Sunday metropolitan morning home editions of the Los Angeles Times during the nine-year period from 1964 through 1972 inclusive. If all issues of the newspaper were analyzed, a total of 3,288 issues would have to have been studied (assuming one daily issue for each of the six 365-day years and one issue per day for the three leap years in the population). Even if only front pages were analyzed, the research task would have been formidable.

Strict application of a widely used sample size formula (refer to Figure 3) would require a sample of 357 newspapers to achieve the desired confidence interval of 95 percent within five percentage points of the correct proportion. Though this would be more manageable than analyzing the entire population, Stempel (1952) recommended a smaller sample size based on sample sizes of 6, 12, 18, 24, and 48 issues per year. Stempel reported that each sample produced comparable results and that increasing the sample size beyond



$$n = \frac{Npq}{(N-1)D + pq}$$

where:

n = sample size

N = population

p = the likelihood of a positive response

q = the likelihood of a negative response

D = the square of the desired confidence level divided by 4

Figure 3. Sample size selection formula.

12 daily issues for a single year does not significantly affect the results of the content analysis. Analyzing 12 issues for each year yields statistically similar results to analysis of all issues in a year and will fall within a 90 percent confidence interval. In fact, Stempel (1952) said that "increasing sample size may be a poor investment of the researcher's time" (p. 334). In the interest of following accepted sample selection procedures for content analysis, this thesis research used a 12-issue base for daily editions (except Sundays) in each year being studied.

Since Stempel chose to limit his study and findings to daily issues and excluded Sunday editions, it was necessary to follow the findings of Hachten (1961) as applied by Ross (1978). Hachten (1961) reported that Stempel's (1952)

12-issue sample size equated favorably to selecting three Sunday issues per year. The resulting ratios are 3.8% of the dailies and 5.8% of the Sunday editions (if 12 and three issues, respectively, are selected). The resulting sample of 15 issues per year represents 4.1% of the total issues published by the Los Angeles Times annually. Even with this relatively small sample of 135 issues, the results were generalizable to the entire universe of 3,288 issues in the research period. A larger sample was not deemed appropriate for this thesis research.

The researcher desired to select issues in such a manner that all would have an equal and unbiased chance of being selected; therefore, a stratified random sample was drawn.

Selecting the Stratified Random Sample. Babbie's (1975) third random number table (p. 474) was entered at column six, row 14 (number 04508) indicating a starting point of the eighth daily issue (determined by the final two digits of the number). A sampling interval of 26 was computed by dividing the number of daily issues by the desired sample size (312 divided by 12). Thus, the following daily issues were examined: 8, 34, 60, 86, 112, 138, 164, 190, 216, 242, 268, and 294. For Sunday editions a similar stratified sample was drawn with a starting point also selected at random from Babbie's third table of random numbers with a starting point of column eight, row 24, number 73923. The interval was 17 based on three issues to be selected from

Table 1  
Daily and Sunday Issues Selected for Content Analysis

		Daily issues examined								
Issue Code	Month	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
008	Jan	9-H	9-S	10-M	10-T	9-T	9-H	9-F	9-S	10-M
034	Feb	8-S	9-T	9-W	9-H	8-H	8-S	9-M	9-T	9-W
060	Mar	10-T	11-H	11-F	11-S	9-S	11-T	11-W	11-H	10-F
086	Apr	9-H	10-S	11-M	11-T	9-T	10-H	10-F	10-S	10-M
112	May	9-S	11-T	11-W	11-H	9-H	10-S	11-M	11-T	10-W
138	Jun	9-T	10-H	10-F	10-S	8-S	10-T	10-W	10-H	9-F
164	Jul	9-H	10-S	11-M	11-T	9-T	10-H	10-F	10-S	10-M
190	Aug	8-S	10-T	10-W	10-H	8-H	9-S	10-M	10-T	9-W
216	Sep	8-T	9-H	9-F	9-S	7-S	9-T	9-W	9-H	8-F
242	Oct	8-H	9-S	10-M	10-T	8-T	9-H	9-F	9-S	9-M
268	Nov	7-S	9-T	9-W	9-H	7-H	8-S	9-M	9-T	8-W
294	Dec	8-T	9-H	9-F	9-S	7-S	9-T	9-W	9-H	8-F

M = Monday      T = Tuesday      W = Wednesday  
H = Thursday    F = Friday        S = Saturday

		Sunday issues examined								
Issue Code	Month	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972
005	Jan	--	31	30	29	--	--	--	31	30
005	Feb	02	--	--	--	04	02	01	--	--
023	May	--	--	--	--	--	--	31	30	28
023	Jun	07	06	05	04	02	01	--	--	--
040	Sep	--	--	--	--	29	28	27	26	24
040	Oct	04	03	02	01	--	--	--	--	--

Note. Daily issues, n = 108; Sunday issues, n = 27.

the 52-issue base. Thus, the fifth, 23rd, and 40th Sunday issues from each year were selected for analysis. Table 1 details individual issues analyzed.

Analysis of the Sample. Because this method of sample selection yields cases uniformly throughout the population,

it was deemed more appropriate than pure random selection of newspaper issues. Each issue had an equal and unbiased chance of being selected. After the sample was drawn, it was noted that the daily issues clustered in the period from the seventh to the 11th of each month, and Sunday editions were drawn only for January, February, May, June, September, and October as a function of the stratified random sample selection process.

#### Data Extraction

Each newspaper selected for analysis was on microfilm in the California State University, Fullerton, library. The individual issues were projected to near-normal size on Recordak MPE-1 readers. As a test to determine uniformity of these machines, the March 2, 1970, Los Angeles Times was projected on two of the readers. Each machine projected a 13.5-pica column on a page 15-7/8 inches wide. During actual data extraction a single machine was used for all measurements. Data were recorded on a matrix similar to that shown in Figure 4.

#### Data Analysis

After the 135 issues were examined and all data extracted, cards were punched with the information obtained and the raw data was entered into the State University Data Center computer. Analysis of the data set was accomplished by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) by Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, and Bent (1975). A variety of statistical and analytical steps was performed on the

<u>Column(s)</u>	<u>Information Coded</u>
1 - 6	Date of publication (e.g., 641003)
7 - 8	Story number for each date
9	Day of week of issue
10 - 12	Section and page number in issue
13	Story writer
14 - 15	General subject of story
16 - 21	Raw attention score
22 - 25	Headline space in square picas
26 - 28	Story length in standard column inches
29 - 32	Artwork size in square picas
33	Total attention score

Figure 4. Sample data matrix used for extraction of data from sample issues. (Refer to page 44 of this thesis for a discussion of attention scores.)

data including crosstabulation and Spearman's rank-order correlations.

#### Coder Reliability

Three CSUF communications graduate students completed a sample coding sheet for one of the issues selected at random. Scott's (1955) coding reliability formulae as modified by Holsti (1969, p. 140) and Ryan and Owen (1976, p. 636) yielded a percentage of agreement, or coefficient of reliability of 91.6% for all stories evaluated by the three coders. This level of intercoder agreement was computed using the formula shown in Figure 5.

$$\text{Coefficient of Reliability} = \frac{3M}{n_1 + n_2 + n_3},$$

where:

M = average number of coding decisions on which all coders agreed, and

n = number of coding decisions made by each coder.

$$\text{Thus, CR} = \frac{3(87.3)}{99 + 88 + 99}$$

$$\text{CR} = 91.6\%$$

Figure 5. Formula and computation of coefficient of reliability for coding.

#### Definition of Terms

Subject. Twenty-five subject categories were coded during the original data extraction. For ease of analysis, these were compressed by recoding into nine groups:

- Vietnam War combat involving U.S. troops
- Vietnam War non-combat involving U.S. troops
- Peace efforts in and concerning Southeast Asia
- General U.S. military activity other than in Vietnam
- Southeast Asia, war-related but not U.S. military
- Defense spending, appropriations, and contracts
- Photographs, art, or cartoons without story
- Demonstrations against the war or military
- Editorials on the war, protests, or peace planning

Article Length. The length of each story was measured in standard column inches. The Los Angeles Times changed

formats on February 15, 1966, so it was necessary to standardize story measurements. Prior to 1966, the Times used eight columns per page. After the format change, six columns were used on pages without advertising and eight columns appeared on other pages. The eight-column pages were more frequent in the sample and were adopted as the standard by which to measure all stories. A typical column inch before the change contained approximately 26 words. After the change, about 28.7 words appeared in each column inch. To standardize the measurements, all story lengths from 1964 through the change in 1966 were multiplied by a conversion factor of 1.11 (Ross, 1978, pp. 19-20).

Attention Score. Budd (1964) improved a method designed to measure newsplay in terms of an attention score which could be applied to any story undergoing content analysis. The attention score can be used alone or with such measures as length and item counts to reveal the nature or direction of newsplay (p. 259). Articles coded by the content analyst receive one point for each of six characteristics:

- Two-column or wider headline.
- Headline wider than half of the page's columns.
- Story starts above the fold.
- Article runs three-quarters or more of a column.
- Article begins on the front page.
- Article is on an editorial page.

Since no story can be on the front page and on an editorial

page, the maximum possible attention score is five. The minimum score is zero, as would accrue for a short story in one column on a page other than the first and in the bottom half of the page. To add to the value of the raw attention score for future analysis, each story was also measured for length, size of artwork, and size of headlines. The latter two were measured in square picas.



#### IV. Results

##### Data Analysis

A total of 1,348 Vietnam War-related stories was coded during data extraction from the 135 issues of the Los Angeles Times examined. Table 2 shows the totals by year in each of the seven general content categories.

Spearman Rho Calculations. To determine if there were trends in coverage of war-related items over the nine-year period, Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients were calculated. Ranks were assigned to years, with the most recent year receiving a one and the earliest year in the sample receiving a nine. Thus, 1964 was assigned a nine and 1972 received a one. The numbers of stories in each category by year were also ranked with the largest value receiving a one; other story totals in each category were assigned numbers two through nine. For example, in the column headed, "Combat stories," 50 would receive a ranking of one, while 8 would receive a ranking of nine.

Spearman rho was calculated for all war-related items ( $n = 1,348$ ) by year, yielding a rank-order correlation coefficient of  $-.60$  which is significant at  $.05$ , the level set for rejection. Other rho values are shown in Figure 2. Where appropriate, coefficients (rho values) are shown with minus signs to indicate negative trends in coverage.

Table 2  
Summary of Stories by General Subject,  
Year, and Spearman Rho

Year	Vietnam War-related news story subjects							Totals
	Combat stories	General military	Peace efforts	Non-U.S. stories	Anti-war protests	Defense spending	Vietnam, non-war	
1964	30	53	2	19	3	6	19	132
1965	50	42	6	27	7	3	34	169
1966	45	29	20	39	8	4	45	190
1967	47	29	16	19	15	10	29	165
1968	43	18	26	20	13	6	24	150
1969	31	39	22	24	16	7	21	160
1970	27	26	12	19	15	8	26	133
1971	8	42	1	29	8	8	25	121
1972	27	32	10	26	14	7	12	128
Totals	308	310	113	222	99	59	235	1,348
Rho	-.696 <sup>a</sup>	-.267	0.000	.150	.575	.596	-.383	-.600 <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients of .60 or higher are statistically significant at the .05 level ( $p < .05$ ).

Items Excluded from the Analysis. In addition to the 1,348 stories, the researcher also identified 132 editorials (8.8% of the total 1,506 items coded) and 26 items of artwork (1.7%). These were excluded from analysis.

Analysis of the Research Questions. Data relating to the first research question (What general war-related topics received the most coverage from 1964 through 1972?) were analyzed to determine trends in coverage over time. As shown in Table 2, a total of 308 stories (22.8% of 1,348) pertained directly to U.S. combat activities in Southeast Asia, primarily Vietnam. General military stories other than Vietnam accounted for 310 items (23.0%). Demonstrations against the war were reported in 99 stories (7.3%). Of these, six reported anti-war protests in foreign countries. Vietnam non-combat activities involving U.S. personnel ( $n = 235$ ) plus war-related but not U.S. stories ( $n = 222$ ) accounted for 457 items (33.9%). Only one category yielded a Spearman rho that was statistically significant. The trend in coverage of combat stories involving U.S. military forces was toward reduced newsplay over the course of the war ( $\rho = -.696$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

Question 2 (Did coverage of military combat versus non-combat stories change during the course of the war?) was answered by comparing the first two content categories listed in Table 2: U.S. military forces in combat ( $n = 308$ ) and U.S. military activities other than in Vietnam ( $n = 310$ ). A Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient of  $-.696$

( $p < .05$ ) indicates that coverage of combat activities in Vietnam declined over time. A Spearman rho of  $-.267$  was calculated for changes in the number of stories during the period concerning U.S. forces not in combat and not in Vietnam, not a significant statistic.

Question 3 (Which types of war-related stories received the dominant newsplay as measured by attention scores?) was examined in several steps. During data extraction, the individual stories were evaluated in terms of attention scores (Budd, 1964, pp. 259-262), with a mean for all stories ( $n = 1,348$ ) of 1.56. One hundred thirty-four stories (9.9%) had no attention score. The modal score was two ( $n = 627$ ; 46.5%), indicating that these stories exhibited two of the attention score characteristics discussed on pages 44 and 45 of this thesis. The full range of attention scores is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3  
Summary of Attention Scores  
by Frequency and Percent

Score	Frequency	Percent
0	134	9.9
1	459	34.1
2	627	46.5
3	116	8.6
4	12	.9
Total	1,348	100.0

Each story was also evaluated in terms of its headline size as measured in square picas. The results are summarized in Table 4. Sixteen items (1.2%), primarily short fillers, had no headlines. The mean size for all headlines was 167.495 square picas, which equates approximately to a headline two columns wide by two lines of 36-point type on a six-column page, the Times' present standard for pages with no advertising. The most frequently observed headline size was 220 square picas (two columns on an eight-column page by 10 picas deep) which occurred 158 times (11.7%). The second most frequently observed headline size was 110 square picas (n = 120; 8.9%), equivalent to a single-column headline on an eight-column page by 10 picas deep.

Table 4

Headline Sizes in Square Picas  
by Group, Number, and Percent

Size Range	Number	Percent
0	16	1.2
1 - 100	452	33.5
101 - 200	464	34.4
201 - 300	300	22.3
301 - 400	50	3.7
401 - 500	19	1.4
501 - 600	16	1.2
601 +	31	2.3
Total	1,348	100.0

Story length was measured in standard column inches with the longest stories ( $n = 2$ ) in excess of 100 inches. Table 5 summarizes story lengths in general groups of 10 inches. The trend among these groups toward decreasing frequency with increasing length is statistically significant ( $\rho = -.915$ ;  $p < .01$ ), indicating that Times' decision-makers preferred to use shorter articles more frequently.

Table 5  
Article Lengths in Standard Column Inches  
by Frequency and Percent

Article length in inches	Frequency	Percent
0 - 9.9	440	32.6
10 - 19.9	379	28.1
20 - 29.9	276	20.5
30 - 39.9	141	10.5
40 - 49.9	54	4.0
50 - 59.9	32	2.4
60 - 69.9	11	.8
70 +	15	1.1
Totals	1,348	100.0

Artwork accompanied stories or appeared alone 322 times in the sample. Each photograph, editorial cartoon, map, or other drawing was measured in square picas, with the mean size being 229.6 square picas (approximately the

size of a standard photograph of one person one column wide. The largest artwork was 4,850 square picas.

As a means of addressing the third research question more specifically, a breakdown analysis was performed on the seven recoded story categories introduced in Table 2 on page 47 in terms of their attention scores. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6  
General Subjects by Frequency,  
Mean Attention Score, Standard  
Error, and Variance

General subject	Frequency	Mean <sup>a</sup>	S.E.	S <sup>2</sup>
U.S. Forces in Combat	308	1.53	.05	.76
General Military, Non-Combat (Outside Vietnam)	310	1.37	.05	.64
Peace Efforts	115	1.77	.08	.65
War-Related (Non-U.S.)	222	1.64	.05	.58
Anti-War Protests	99	1.42	.07	.43
Defense Appropriations	59	1.54	.12	.84
Vietnam, Non-Combat	235	1.76	.05	.64
For Entire Sample	1,348	1.57	.02	.67

<sup>a</sup>Mean attention score recorded for each general story category.

The highest mean attention scores were attained by stories reporting peace efforts ( $n = 115$ ; mean =  $1.77 \pm .08$ ) and non-combat activities in Vietnam ( $n = 235$ ; mean =  $1.76 \pm .05$ ).

The lowest mean attention scores were for general military stories other than Vietnam ( $n = 310$ ; mean =  $1.37 \pm .05$ ) and anti-war demonstrations and protests ( $n = 99$ ; mean =  $1.42 \pm .07$ ). Because of the relatively narrow differences between the means and the overlaps revealed by the introduction of the standard errors, there does not appear to be a relationship between general subject matter and attention scores.

Data relating to the fourth question (What types of combat and protest story attribution were used during the war and how frequently?) were analyzed by using a breakdown procedure in terms of attention scores. Stories or features written by columnists ( $n = 20$ ; 1.5% of the total) had the highest attention score (2.30) and a standard error of .22 (range 2.08 to 2.52). Most columnist-written items were on opinion or editorial pages and tended to be treated as attention-getters with larger headlines, large graphics, longer articles, or a combination of these factors. By their very nature, opinion and editorial pages were designed differently than news pages (such as page one), so the larger mean attention score for the columnists may not be significant. However, the small standard errors and dispersed means indicate that the Los Angeles Times tended to treat each writer category differently. As may be expected, by-lined articles received higher newsplay than any other category except articles by columnists. In this



study it was found that 449 by-lined stories (33.3%) had a mean attention score of 1.96 and only a .03 standard error. Table 7 summarizes the five general writer categories of Times' by-line, Times' staff writer (no by-line), wire services, columnists, and other writers. The summary is presented in terms of mean attention scores, standard error, and variance.

Table 7  
Writers by Frequency, Mean Attention Score,  
Standard Error, and Variance

Writer	Frequency	Mean <sup>a</sup>	S.E.	Variance
<u>Times'</u> By-Line	449	1.96	.03	.52
<u>Times'</u> Staff (No By-Line)	191	1.09	.05	.52
Wire Services	597	1.39	.03	.58
Columnists	20	2.30	.22	.96
Other Writers	91	1.57	.09	.74
For Entire Sample	1,348	1.57	.02	.67

<sup>a</sup>Mean attention score for each type of writer.

Analysis of Question 5 (Was anti-war violence covered more than non-violent demonstrations?) revealed 99 stories concerning worldwide anti-war rallies, riots, and demonstrations. Of these 75 (5.6% of all stories) reported non-violent opposition to the war, while 24 (1.8%) reported violent opposition. A Spearman rank-order correlation

coefficient of .421 was obtained for numbers of stories covering non-violent opposition over time; the result is not statistically significant. A Spearman rho of .608 ( $p < .05$ ) was calculated for worldwide violent opposition over the nine-year period, indicating a trend toward increasing coverage of anti-war violence.

To assess specific trends in coverage over time related to the sixth research question (Did newsplay of combat and protest activities vary over time during the course of the war?), two types of stories—Vietnam War activity including combat and support, and anti-war protests in the United States—were analyzed using Spearman's rho. A total of 530 stories (39.3% of 1,348) reported military activities in Vietnam, while 93 stories (6.9%) reported protests of all types in the United States. Vietnam stories tended to be concentrated in the early years of the sample, but stories concerning protests in the United States were more likely to occur from the middle to the end of the period. A Spearman rho of  $-.600$  ( $p < .05$ ) was calculated for the number of Vietnam stories over time, indicating that coverage tended to decline during the research period. A Spearman rho of .713 ( $p < .05$ ) was calculated for protests stories in the same period indicating that as the war progressed, the Los Angeles Times was likely to increase coverage of protests at the same time it was reducing Vietnam coverage. Both trends may be the result of events. Table 8 displays the relationship between coverage of Vietnam stories and

articles about protest activities in the United States. The number of stories by year in each category is similar to the entries in Table 2 except that foreign demonstrations have been omitted from Table 8.

Table 8  
Relationship of Vietnam and Protest Coverage  
by Year, Number, and Percent<sup>a</sup>

Year	Total stories by year	Vietnam stories <sup>b</sup>		Protest stories <sup>c</sup>	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1964	132	46	34.8	3	2.3
1965	169	82	48.5	6	3.6
1966	190	89	46.8	7	3.7
1967	165	72	43.6	13	7.9
1968	150	66	44.0	13	8.7
1969	160	51	31.9	16	10.0
1970	133	53	39.8	14	10.5
1971	121	32	26.4	7	5.8
1972	128	39	30.5	14	10.9
Totals	1,348	530	39.3 <sup>d</sup>	93	6.9 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Story category percents relate to totals by year.

<sup>b</sup>Vietnam stories include combat and non-combat activity in Vietnam involving U.S. personnel; U.S. diplomatic stories (n = 13) concerning Vietnam are excluded.

<sup>c</sup>Protest stories include only anti-war activities in the United States; foreign demonstrations (n = 6) have been omitted.

<sup>d</sup>Total percents are proportion of entire sample of 1,348.

Another Spearman rho analysis was performed for rankings of the percent of total stories by year for the two categories contained in Table 8. In the Vietnam War stories category, a Spearman rho of  $-.683$  ( $p < .05$ ) confirmed declining coverage suggested by the correlation obtained by analyzing the number of stories per year. Protest stories yielded a Spearman rho value of  $.833$  ( $p < .05$ ) which also suggests that protest stories were covered more as the war progressed.

Overview of Trends in Coverage. As a final evaluation of trends in coverage by type of story, each content category listed in Table 2 on page 47 was subjected to Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis. The changes in numbers of stories reporting U.S. military forces in combat showed the strongest trend ( $\rho = -.696$ ;  $p < .05$ ), with coverage declining as the war progressed. Two other story categories yielded Spearman rho values that were close to the level set for statistical significance; both warrant special mention. Anti-war demonstrations worldwide ( $n = 99$ ;  $\rho = .575$ ) and defense appropriations ( $n = 59$ ;  $\rho = .596$ ) may have been covered more frequently as the war progressed, though the correlation coefficients were slightly less than the value set for rejection ( $.60$ ).

Overall, coverage of Vietnam War-related issues, excluding editorials and artwork, declined over the course of the research period ( $\rho = -.600$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

## V. Conclusions and Implications

The Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient for all stories ( $n = 1,348$ ) in the nine-year research period indicates that as the war progressed, the overall coverage of war-related issues declined significantly. Analysis of individual story categories revealed that while Vietnam coverage in general declined, newsplay of anti-war protests and demonstrations increased through the research period. The increasing anti-war coverage may be tied to the Times' anti-war stance after 1970, though the specific link was not tested in this research. With a randomly drawn sample of issues in the nine-year period, it is possible to generalize the following to the entire population of 3,288 issues:

1. Ninety-five percent of the samples of 135 issues drawn using a systematic random method would yield similar results within five percentage points of the true proportions.
2. The Times tended to emphasize anti-war activities more as the war progressed, with increasing coverage as the war neared an end.
3. During the course of the war, the Los Angeles Times provided generally declining coverage of all issues pertaining to the war and opposition to it.

4. Times' editors tended to place nearly equal emphasis on newsplay of all war-related issues.

#### A Paradigm of War Coverage

The results of this study lend some support to development of a general paradigm of war coverage which may assist future researchers in performing similar studies on wars in general and unpopular wars in particular. From this research, it appears that an unpopular war will be characterized by media coverage in three general, overlapping phases. The first phase was not tested in this research, but has been suggested by Scanlon, Luukko, and Morton (1978):

1. The first stages of the military crisis will yield dense coverage with some inaccuracies and incompleteness until details are sorted out and facts become available.

The present study supports two additional phases:

2. As the war continues and public opposition develops, coverage of the crisis will be supplemented by newsplay of opposition activities.

3. As public opposition increases, coverage of the anti-war movement will also increase as coverage of the war decreases.

The Present Study and the Paradigm. The Los Angeles Times provided (overall) a balanced approach to coverage of the unpopular military crisis known as the Vietnam War, though it tended to emphasize anti-war activities near the end of the war and deemphasize war coverage. Times' decision-makers placed emphasis on nearly every category of

war-related story early in the war. Times' coverage during the entire nine-year period adhered closely to the general paradigm of military crisis coverage suggested earlier.

### Attention Scores

Times' decision-makers emphasized some war-related news with slightly more newsplay, though the significance of the difference was not established statistically. This may be the result of numbers of stories in the various categories. For example, the 115 peace effort stories received a mean attention score of 1.77, while the 308 stories reporting U.S. combat activities received a 1.53. The .24 gap in favor of peace effort stories is best characterized by the statisticians' question, "How much difference is a difference?" The results of this research show that statistically, at least, the difference is nonsignificant. Did the numerical weight of the stories account for differences in the minds of readers? This study did not address that issue, one which may never be possible to quantify. On the whole, Times' editors treated all war-related stories as they would any other news—approximately two attention score points were applied to each story on the average. If any bias was expressed in newsplay, it was in favor of Times' by-lines and columnists, which received nearly twice the attention score of other types of writers, including the wire services.

### Limitations of the Study

Several limitations may have affected this study's results and should be taken into account in consideration of

the findings.

Sample Size. Despite the time and effort advantages of selecting a 15-issue research base for each year of the study, that sample size may be too small to yield reliable results when compared with other samples drawn from the same nine-year base. Though Stempel (1952) suggested that 12 daily issues provide comparable results to larger samples, and though Hachten (1961) equated three Sunday issues to the Stempel sample, a larger sample size might reveal more reliability. As Ross (1978) suggested, perhaps one issue per week, drawn randomly or systematically, would yield more accurate results (p. 54).

Page Format. The Los Angeles Times changed its format in 1966. Thus, it was necessary to compile story length information in standard column inches. Though this study did not make wide use of story length as a means of measuring newsplay, future studies may choose to emphasize that measure in conjunction with attention scores.

Data Storage and Retrieval. Since the research medium was microfilm, several possible problems may have been introduced that were beyond the control of the researcher. First, it was not known precisely what the original page size of each issue was. Future researchers desiring to replicate this study or research beyond it may prefer to use actual copies of the newspaper which should be available in some large libraries or from the Los Angeles Times.



Though more cumbersome than microfilm, original newspapers would yield accurate, replicable, consistent measurements possibly unobtainable on microfilm readers. Second, since the newspapers were on microfilm, it was necessary to use a projection device to enlarge the page images to near-normal size. Future researchers, desiring to replicate this study, should use similar equipment with similar lenses and magnification factors. Such equipment should yield results within  $\pm 5\%$  of the results of this study. Third, because microfilm readers are often used in a darkened room (as were the ones used for data extraction in this study), the great difference in light levels between the projected image and the data matrix may introduce a fatigue factor. Future researchers should consider using multiple coders or relatively short data extraction periods to reduce the likelihood of errors.

#### Future Studies

The Vietnam War has been the subject of only a few analytical studies and even fewer content analyses of newspapers. This study should be replicated using other samples of the Los Angeles Times to gather evidence in support of the military crisis coverage paradigm and eventual development of a military crisis coverage theory. More important, perhaps, future studies should perform similar research on other major national newspapers such as the New York Times and Washington Post. Such studies could be compared to learn if there was a national trend in war coverage during the

1960's and early 1970's. The product of all such studies may be a predictive model that could be applied to future crisis situations, particularly those which produce an unpopular reaction as occurred in the case of the Vietnam War.

Two other types of studies would benefit the development of a military crisis-coverage theory. A gatekeeping study could determine if media, particularly newspapers, through their gatekeeping or agenda-setting functions influenced or reacted to public opinion with relation to the war. Also, a study could analyze how, if at all, the newspaper treatment of all war-related issues appealed to or influenced reader uses and gratifications.

Finally, should another unpopular military crisis occur, researchers could conduct a study to content analyze newspapers as the crisis progressed and at the same time perform field surveys to study public reactions both to the crisis and to media treatment of all issues pertaining to the military crisis situation. An integral part of this study could be an analysis of the interrelationships between war correspondents and the war itself as suggested by Dimmick (1973) and this research (p. 25).

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## Appendix I

### The Kent State Tragedy

The following summary of the Kent State tragedy was extracted verbatim from Butwin and Pirmantgen (1972, pp. 176-178) and is provided to give a view of how anti-war sentiment and protest grew from a rally to death.

[On the evening of Friday, May 1, 1970,] about 500 beer-drinking students went on a rampage, breaking a few dozen windows on North Water Street before police dispersed them with tear gas. At midnight the police invoked a curfew and chased more students out of the bars and back to the campus of Kent State University. On Saturday, May 2, the attention of most protest-watchers was focused upon the Panther rallies at Yale, in their second day. That evening at Kent State a few hundred students marched through the campus and set fire to a wooden ROTC building. Police and sheriff's deputies arrived with the fire department, and tear gassed students who had cut a fire hose. The students roved through the campus, setting small fires here and there, knocking over trash cans, scrawling slogans on walls. About an hour after the ROTC fire began, the National Guard rolled into town. The mayor of Kent had asked Governor James Rhodes to send in the 600 Guardsmen, who were called directly from several days and nights of duty patrolling a rough Teamsters' strike. Armed with loaded rifles and bayonets, the Guardsmen helped police scatter the students and hustled them back to their dormitories.

On Sunday, Governor Rhodes came to Kent to declare a state of emergency and to ban outdoor rallies and demonstrations. The Guard would remain on campus, he announced. . . .

Over the weekend, U.S. planes bombed North Vietnam for the first time since the November 1968 bombing halt. The four massive raids were all authorized in advance by

the President as part of the Cambodian battle plans. They were aimed at air defense sites, but Radio Hanoi charged that civilians—including 20 children—had been killed. Monday's [May 4] newspapers reported that American tanks were rolling into Cambodia, uprooting trees and destroying villages to keep them out of the enemy's hands. According to an American officer, the town of Mimot had been "pretty well blown away" by American bombers after an American helicopter was fired upon from the town. Meanwhile troops continued to uncover large quantities of enemy rifles, rice, bicycle tires, oil and gasoline.

On Monday at Kent State the Guardsmen were still on campus. After a quiet morning several students rang the victory bell for a rally on the Commons. About 1,500 students came to the Commons, others flocked about the edge; people came to protest against the presence of the National Guard but they also came to watch, and many were passing from one class to another. One hundred Guardsmen also materialized. Cruising over the grass in a jeep, an officer with a bullhorn told the crowd to leave—their demonstration was illegal. "Pigs off campus! Strike, strike!" students shouted. "We don't want your war."

Gas-masked Guardsmen answered by throwing tear gas canisters into the crowd. A few of the canisters were tossed back. Then some students picked up rocks from a gravel parking lot and threw them at the Guardsmen, were too far away to sustain many hits. When they had apparently run out of tear gas, about 30 of the troops backed up a hill. Suddenly, with no warning, they aimed and fired into the crowd.

Bleeding students fell to the ground, others took cover or fled. When the firing stopped, four students were dead, nine wounded.

## Appendix II

### The Role of Media in War

[The following review of media functions during times of war relies heavily on Knightley, 1975, one of few comprehensive sources on the subject.]

#### The American Civil War

Reporting during the period from 1861 to 1865 in the American Civil War was more extensive and more immediate than in any previous period of military conflict.

For the first time in American history, it was possible for the public to read what had happened yesterday, rather than someone's opinion of what had happened last week. (Knightley, 1975, pp. 20-21)

This was made possible by the installation of more than 50,000 miles of telegraph wire in the Eastern states alone. Unfortunately, the telegraph's infant technology brought with it several problems that compounded the correspondents' difficulties. Rates for transmitting stories were high and some companies demanded payment in advance. Nevertheless, stories "by-telegraph" became more frequent as the war continued. Some newspapers became so accustomed to the immediacy of wire stories that they held a page open to include the latest news of the war (Knightley, 1975, p. 20).

The speed with which news could be published brought

with it a call for censorship from the military. There is no record of American press censorship prior to the Civil War (Emery, 1972, p. 239), but the military and the press developed a means to control sensitive information. It was not without considerable trial and error, however, partially because of the freedom that newspapers had enjoyed before the war. Press censorship went through three phases before a workable system of correspondent accreditation was developed in 1863 under a plan conceived by General William T. Sherman. The accreditation process was still being followed a hundred years later in Southeast Asia (Emery, 1972, pp. 240-243).

#### The Indian Wars, 1866-1867

If American journalists had learned anything about accurate reporting during the Civil War, the lessons were forgotten or ignored within a matter of months, when many newspapers relied heavily on volunteer correspondents to write about the Indian Wars in the expanding West. Watson (1940) reported that some newspapers used Army officers as correspondents

who could scarcely be expected to be unbiased in their reports of engagements with the Indians, especially when the soldiers were outmarched, outmaneuvered and, as was all too frequently the case, outfought by their . . . adversaries. (p. 302)

Much of the "news" from the frontier was little more than a rudimentary form of

propaganda to influence the federal government to send more soldiers to the "threatened" areas, thus giving

local tradesmen an opportunity to sell more supplies to the troops. (Watson, 1940, pp. 302-303)

Watson also described Indian War reporting as fabricated, inflated, and rumor-inspired (pp. 302-310).

The same complaint was levied 100 years later by some editors against their Vietnam-based correspondents, though the charge in the 1960's and 1970's was less true than it had been in the 1860's.

#### World War I

The military apparently learned its lesson from the Indian War experience with respect to soldiers serving as correspondents. The first general order of World War I read in part that no person in the military service could serve as a paid correspondent or receive any payment for publication of anything he had written (Larson, 1940b, p. 314). Newspaper correspondents received a list of regulations governing censorship in early 1918. Since the World War I correspondents were the responsibility of the military intelligence staff, the censorship rules were intended primarily to protect the security of military operations than to impede the flow of news (Larson, 1940b, pp. 316-317).

As was the case in the Civil War, World War I reporters had to be accredited if they wished to perform as permanent war reporters. Despite this restriction, war correspondents were held in high esteem by the military command in Europe, as Larson (1940b) reported by quoting the American Expeditionary Force's General Order Number 98, dated June 15, 1918:

The newspaper correspondents who are duly accredited by the War Department and attached to the American Expeditionary Force are charged with the duty of keeping the American public informed of the activities of our forces. They are under military control, and all matter written by them is submitted for censorship. The work of these correspondents is considered to be of the greatest importance, as it is essential that our activities be truly and promptly represented to the American public. All members of the American Expeditionary Force should understand that these accredited correspondents are held worthy of confidence, and it is expected that every reasonable facility and assistance be extended to them to enable them to obtain all proper information for the efficient performance of their duties. (p. 321)

While the confidence grew, so did the rules of censorship which were designed to "prevent leakage of military information" (Larson, 1940b, p. 323, citing A.E.F. General Order No. 146, dated September 1, 1918).

Early in American involvement in the war, the United States established a Committee on Public Information which was chaired by George Creel, a journalist before he took the position (Knightley, 1975, p. 122). The Creel Committee, as it came to be known, was responsible for disseminating official war propaganda and glamorizing the war. Thus, any conflict between Creel's "news" and correspondents' dispatches from Europe would have been unacceptable. Censorship of war news at its source became the only feasible way for the government and the military to prevent the inevitable conflict between the news sources before a disagreement occurred (Knightley, 1975, pp. 122-123).

## World War II

While World War I was characterized by a central news

source (Creel's committee), World War II correspondents faced other, perhaps more stringent difficulties in trying to report war action.

Shortly before World War II started, the Allied general staff decided

that as far as they were concerned the war would be a newsless one and that the system for controlling war correspondents would be exactly the same as in 1914-1918. (Knightley, 1975, p. 218)

But the methods for controlling World War II correspondents went beyond the measures of the earlier war. Now there was to be an official "eye-witness," a journalist who would be selected to provide basic war coverage. Carefully censored dispatches would be permitted if they were written on subjects that would be unlikely to harm morale at home (Knightley, 1975, p. 218).

When Americans entered the war, correspondents felt the tightest censorship clamp ever applied to war news. Military leaders had decided immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that "news of such a disaster would be unacceptable to the American people" (Knightley, 1975, p. 272), so the true extent of the attack was not revealed until after the war ended.

Elaborate offices for publicizing the war effort abroad and at home were created, partially "to prevent correspondents from learning anything [the military] did not want them to know" (Knightley, 1975, p. 275). When the censor's scissors went to work on most articles, one group of writers



turned to the soldiers themselves and began to write the feature articles about military life in the war zone that characterized much of World War II reporting, particularly by a writer named Ernie Pyle.

While censorship and a certain amount of propaganda stood in the way of accurate reporting about World War II, correspondents were probably better informed about the war than their counterparts were 25 years later in Vietnam. Since no story could be sent to the United States without censorship during World War II, commanders were free to discuss more information without fear of compromise (Knightley, 1975, pp. 315-316). Neither commanders nor correspondents in Vietnam enjoyed that freedom.

#### The Korean Conflict

Correspondents were generally unprepared to cover the combat in Korea when it started. Only a few writers were stationed there in 1950 and what few writers were there in June and July 1950 were subject to the same panic and frustration experienced by the soldiers. Limited communications forced some correspondents to fly to Japan to send their news to the United States. At this early stage of the fighting, censorship was largely unknown and correspondents were free to report the war as they saw it. Reporters wrote of the fear and panic that was characteristic of the American fighting men (Knightley, 1975, pp. 336-337).

In January 1951 censorship rules were enacted to protect the security of the military forces in Korea. All

correspondents had to be accredited and their dispatches were censored, much as they had been during the previous two wars. One difference was the absence of government propaganda during the Korean Conflict.

### The War in Vietnam

The early American correspondents in Vietnam endured some of the same problems encountered by writers in America's earlier wars—accreditation (by the South Vietnamese government); censorship, particularly of stories critical of the Saigon government; and censorship of stories on military matters. Plainly, the United States' military advisers did not want the American people to learn the extent of the war (Knightley, 1975, p. 375). Correspondents throughout the war faced the unenviable task of reconciling what they knew was happening in Vietnam with what their counterparts in Washington, D.C., said was happening in Vietnam. The two pictures rarely agreed. Reporters in both situations may have been misled to such an extent that the Washington story was usually published because few editors believed that the Washington story could be so different from the Vietnam reporter's story and be false. Editors obviously believed that the field reporters in Vietnam had their facts in error (Knightley, 1975, pp. 375-381).

As the war progressed, enough correspondents in Vietnam wrote about the war and its lack of progress to convince editors in the United States that the "official" version of the war from Washington was not telling the complete story

(Knightley, 1975, pp. 380-383).

The large contingent of American reporters in Vietnam numbered 637 during the Tet period of January 1968 (Knightley, 1975, p. 398). Several American newspapers had full-time bureaus in various parts of Vietnam during the war, as did the major wire services and magazines (Braestrup, 1978, pp. 9-20). After the My Lai massacre was revealed in the American press in November 1969, the number of full-time correspondents in Vietnam declined gradually but steadily. It appears that the "novelty of American troops in combat had worn off by 1968; combat features were relegated to the back pages" (Braestrup, 1978, p. 24).

Just as news coverage of the war was declining, much of the combat activity was increasing. Knightley (1975) enlarged on the inconsistency of this situation:

At a time when the most damage of the war was being inflicted on Indo-China, the news coverage was at its worst, because editors and producers had decided that the ground war was virtually over and that, with the steady withdrawal of United States troops under way, public interest had declined. (pp. 398-399)

It was 1969 when the number of correspondents began to decline. The war on the ground still had three devastating years to go.

Many of the correspondents who remained in Saigon and did not see much actual fighting received the bulk of their story information during a daily briefing, dubbed the "Five O'Clock Follies," which was the official version of military activity in Vietnam. While official, it was incomplete, as

Just (1968) explained:

The briefing became an exercise in methodology, a means of exposing the inherent error of body counts, weapons counts, search and destroy missions which had turned left at the wrong coordinate; a meticulous search for conceptual error. . . . The briefing was the principal source of news giving the official version of the war. It was one version among many, all of them inaccurate in the singular, but the one from which most newspaper-reading Americans received their perception of the war. From the briefing came the war story. . . . It was a bad way to learn anything about the war, either the terms on which it was being fought or the means by which it might be won. . . . The only consolation for the correspondents was that they knew instinctively that the versions of the war which came from Saigon were intrinsically sounder than the versions from Washington. (pp. 18-19)